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ABSTRACT

This occasional paper discusses and advances the teaching of history in U.S. schools by noted historians. James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, explains the resources available through the Library of Congress' National Digital Library Program designed to bring five million items into digitized format and make them available throughout the country. Theodore. K. Rabb, professor of history at Princeton University, described the downward trend in the teaching of history and called for a renewal of commitment to reverse this trend. David McCullough, Pulitzer Prize winner, discussed the power of the photograph and how that can draw students into history. Carol Gluck of Columbia University cautioned that memory may drive history out and put more recent events into clear-cut right or wrong decisions when numerous perspectives are actually involved. Richard Moe, President of The National Trust for Historic Preservation, emphasized the importance of cultural sites and how technology has increased the power of place. W. Chris Stewart, director of English and History Curriculum Framework Project for the District of Columbia Public Schools, discussed the role of classroom practices in student attitudes toward history. Geno Flores, teacher-consultant for the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), stressed the role of assessment of student knowledge in a way that demonstrates what they know rather than what facts they can recite. (EH)

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# Advancing History Education In American Schools. A Symposium at the Library of Congress, March 1-2, 1996. Panel 1. Occassional Paper.

National Council for History Education, Inc., Westlake, OH.

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OCCASIONAL PAPER

National Council for History Education, Inc.

promoting history in school and society

# Advancing History Education In American Schools

*a Symposium at the Library of Congress, March 1-2, 1996*

*Panel 1*

**James Billington**, *The Librarian of Congress*

It is a real pleasure to welcome as Librarian of Congress a conference designed to discuss and advance the teaching of history in American schools. Someone who sits as custodian on top of the treasures and the history of our nation can only be thrilled at the prospect of renewal among the people who are on the front lines interpreting, bringing alive the record of the past.

I love to quote Northrop Frye when people ask me about the future. My main beat used to be Russian history, so I'm sometimes asked what's going to happen next week, and I always quote Northrop Frye: "the best crystal ball is a rear-view mirror." I think that the study of history, the meditation on it, the continuing fascination with it, is almost as important as the accumulation of one's own life experience.

*NCHE Chair, Theodore K. Rabb (left), talks with President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Richard Moe.*

In our present-minded society, and in this particularly present-minded city, serious history is too often neglected, too often subordinated to the educational or political fads of the moment. The preoccupation with the present, the hurry-up bumper car of emotion that television promotes, pushes aside the train of thought which a reading culture encourages, and which we hope the new interactive media culture can reinforce.

We at the Library of Congress welcome you not only because we have a firm tradition of support for historical inquiry here, but more importantly because in our 1990-1994 American Memory Test Project we made broadly available, through digital means, some of the unique archives held by the Library that illuminate many aspects of American history. I know that you'll have an hour later this afternoon to explore with some of my colleagues the purposes and the present state of our much expanded National Digital Library Program, which is the follow-up to American Memory and is designed to bring five million items—the core of our American collection—into digitized form so as to make them available, as near to free as possible, throughout the country. The Program will be able to combine music, maps, photography, film, texts, and voice in an integrated way, and will be accessible via the Internet. We hope it will make history come alive for students, because we discovered through the American Memory Pilot that students—even third- and fourth-graders—can get turned on by exposure to the primary documents of American history when they see them on their computer screens.

What happens is that the students start asking questions and go to teachers and books for answers. While technology can of course stir the imagination, and can be the means of conveying things that people couldn't see with such clarity before, it is the teacher, the human interface at the end of the

terminal, who remains the key to learning. An inquiring mind, an enthusiastic questioner, can guide the exploration of both the familiar and the unfamiliar. These are the people we remember from our own experience: the teachers who made a difference, who taught us to read and to reflect.

Our scientific colleagues are now coordinating, with the new techniques of molecular biology, a non-invasive imaging of the brain, and have discovered what we all, as teachers, have known intuitively: the tremendous importance of early learning experiences in shaping the capacity for continued learning. Beginning to learn, of course, makes us want to learn more, and in the next day you will be addressing this need in a vital area, history.

Few endeavors can be more helpful to our future than the effort to root the upcoming generation in our own past, and in a shared sense of the multiple stories that make up that past. This brings before them the achievements of all who have come before—the problems as well as the accomplishments, but above all the cumulative human record, of those who first created and then broadened our democracy.

I wish you well in your discussions and in your continuing careers as teachers. I'd like to close this word of welcome with what I think is one of the great tributes to teaching. It was given by the ancient Chinese philosopher Wang Wei, who was asked at the end of a very long life as a richly experienced Mandarin what his greatest satisfaction had been. They asked him, 'What's the most important thing you've ever done in your life?" And he said, "Oh, that's easy. Watching a younger person go whistling down the road after asking me the way." You are the people who are showing the way. You're doing that by showing the way that those who came before us went. I congratulate you. I hope we can be of help to you and I welcome you all here.

➳ **T.K. Rabb**, *Chair, NCHE, and Professor of History, Princeton University*

The entire purpose of the National Council for History Education is to create a grass-roots commitment to the teaching of history. The representation from some forty states that we have here today is a perfect testimony to that commitment, and why we can bill this meeting as the launching of a national campaign. Today is the beginning of the end for the constant moaning about the state of history—for the doomsayers who say that no one knows any history, that the understanding and teaching of history is going perpetually downhill.

We believe that the downward trend can be turned around. Indeed, the goal of this meeting is to produce a set of recommendations to the states for that very purpose. Because it is state by state that this battle is going to have to be fought. We have a number of state councils already, and our hope is to cover the country before too long.

In my own state of New Jersey there is an extremely active state council which has just done wonderful work with a curriculum framework proposal that was little short of a total disaster. Following a whole series of drafts and meetings and reports, all of them fruitless, we finally got the history teachers of New Jersey to get their act together. We even threatened to have a History Teachers' March on Trenton (if you can believe such a thing), and we got the curriculum framework changed. We got history placed front and center, and I believe that that is something that can be done everywhere. In fact, some other states, such as Virginia, have already been able to do so. We have to take that campaign to every state house and legislature, to every department of education throughout the nation.

We need, first, certain common goals. That's one of the reasons that we hope this symposium can agree on a number of recommendations that we can carry to all of the states. That is essentially what we're about: to launch a campaign, and not only at the state level. We hope to bring business leaders to join us, so that the country as a whole can begin to take seriously the decline in history education, begin to seek improvements in the qualifications of teachers, and begin to infuse history into the curriculum.

That, my friends, has to be our ringing declaration. And, to help it ring forth, it has to be the focus of what we talk about for the next day: why the teaching of history is important, what it's about, and how we can reverse the decline that we all deplore.

➳ **David McCullough**, *Pulitzer Prize-winning Author*

We live in a little town in Massachusetts, where the congregational church stands at the center of the village. For many years we had a wonderful old

Quaker pastor in the pulpit who came from Indiana, and he loved to tell the story—which resonates for us, because we're on the island of Martha's Vineyard—of the woman from Kansas who, when she first arrived on the East coast, went out to Horseneck Beach. She beheld the ocean for the first time, and she said that she'd never seen so much of anything she couldn't use.

I think that's the way a lot of people feel about history, and we have to be tolerant of those folks and bring them into the tent, because it's a good tent, an important one. I had the extreme good fortune a few years ago—thanks to two of our finest American historians, Mary Beth Norton and Michael Kammen—to be invited to teach for a term at Cornell. I had never taught a course before. I had lectured often at universities and colleges and schools, but I'd never taught a full course. Since it was an open invitation to do anything I wanted, I decided to try some experiments, and I want to tell you today about one experiment that worked. It worked so well it took my breath away. That it worked I know because I saw by their later career choices, that it changed the lives of a number of the students.

My experiment was based on the feeling that we need to bring more of the devices, the processes, of the lab to the teaching of the humanities. We need to stop and think, perhaps more than we sometimes do, about how people actually learn rather than how we teach.

As it happens, I became an historian because of pure chance. One day here in the Library of Congress, my wife Rosalee and I were walking past some tables in the old Prints and Photography Division, where a number of photographs that had just been acquired by the Library were spread out on a table to be organized and filed. They had been given to the Library by the heirs of a man who had had a photography shop in Pittsburgh in the 19th century. They were all stunning photographs, amazing photographs, taken shortly after the disastrous flood at Johnstown, PA, in 1889. I had grown up in that part of the country, and I had heard about the flood all my life, but I really didn't know much about it. And when we stopped and looked at those photographs, the extent of the violence they revealed was so astonishing, so overwhelming, that I felt I would like to read something about it. I took two books out of the library, but neither was very satisfactory; in fact, I knew enough of the geography of the area, having grown up there, to realise that some of what they said was just plain wrong.

I had read a wonderful interview with Thornton Wilder in which he had been asked how he got the ideas for his books or his plays, and he said he imagined a story he would like to read, or a story he would like to see performed on the stage. If he found that nobody had written that story, he would write it himself, so that he could read it or see it performed on the stage. Well, this to me was a wonderful concept, and I thought, "Why don't you try to write the book about the Johnstown Flood that you would like to read?"

And so the photographs were the springboard, the photographs were the bait that pulled me, not just into a book but into a whole career. And at Cornell I thought, "What if I could duplicate that experience for my students?"

*Rosalee and David McCullough*

I told them they were going to be given an assignment for their term paper unlike any they'd ever had before. Each one was presented with a photograph. Everybody got a different photograph, and no photograph was given to a specific person for any particular reason. It was luck of the draw, and it was *their* photograph.

The photograph had nothing but the most basic information on it. It would say, "American oil tanker

being sunk off the coast of Florida by a German U-boat, February 15, 1942;" or it would say, "Courtesy of the Tompkins County Historical Society;" or it would say, "Fannie Brice" or "Graduating class, Tuskegee University, 1912." That's all. The rest was up to the students. They could do whatever they wanted. I said, "There's no right answer. There's no wrong answer. There will be insufficient answers. There will be boring answers. There will be inadequate answers. There will be unimaginative answers, and there will be answers that aren't well written. There will be answers that are extremely well written. What's at stake is your resourcefulness, your energy, your imagination in taking this idea and making something of it. Nobody else has done it before. Very possibly nobody else has ever written on these subjects before, and maybe never will again. And you're not competing with anybody else in your class because nobody else has that picture."

I told them that they could trade their photograph if they didn't like it, if they could find somebody else who was willing to trade. Out of 183 students, there was only one trade.

We are raising, as you know, wonderfully bright kids who are extremely adept at giving teac er what teacher wants. But I'd never experienced that before. "What did I want?" I was asked. But I told them, "I'm not going to tell you what I want, because there isn't anything I want except a good performance." Or they would come to me and say, "What'll I do with this picture?" And I would say, "That's up to you."

One young woman came to me with the photograph of the oil tanker being sunk by the German submarine off the shoreline of Florida. It astonished her that the war was so close in 1942. She said, "I don't know what to do with this." And I said, "Well, go think about it and come back and tell me." And so, she came back and she said, "Well, I was thinking of doing a paper about Admiral Donitz and the campaign to pick off the oil tankers as they came out of the Panama Canal, through the Gulf Coast, and before they got to the East Coast or went on to Europe." I said, "That's a great idea."

She said, "Then I was thinking, I would call some of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion posts in the area, and see if I could find somebody who had been on a tanker or a ship that had been sunk at sea, and interview that person and get some idea of what that horrible experience was like." I said, "That's a very good idea."

She said, "Then I was thinking I would contact the oil company that owned that ship and do a paper about all the tankers in the fleet—how many did they lose, how much oil did they carry, what was their contribution to the war effort." And I said, "That's a wonderful idea."

There was a long pause and she said, "Which one should I do?" And I said, "Well, I'm not going to tell you." In the end, she did the last one, about the oil company. It was a superb paper.

I had a young fellow whose photograph was of Alvin York, Sergeant York. I don't believe the student knew then in which century World War I took place. I saw him here in Washington about three years later, and he said, "You know, World War I has become my hobby."

I ran into another former student at the National Archives one day, and she said, "Mr. McCullough"— actually she said 'Professor McCullough,' and I liked that! — "I was in your class at Cornell and I changed my major. I majored in history. Now I'm here on the staff of the National Archives."

I asked her what her photograph had been. "Fannie Brice," she said. I remembered her paper very well.

She had wanted to compile a scrapbook of a kind Fannie Brice's family might have kept about her career. It would be composed of her notices, her reviews, photos and advertisements, and letters from Fannie telling the people back home how it was going, where she was, what it was like, and so forth. I told the student that would be fine, as long as she drew it all from real sources and provided a bibliography. She did a wonderful scrapbook.

One young fellow came in, and he had the old **New Yorker** cartoon of the New York swells saying, "Let's all go down to the Trans Lux and hiss Roosevelt." He came in and he really was in a stew. He said, "I don't know *what* this is about." I said, "What do you think the Trans Lux is?" He said, "I think it's a train." And I said, "You know, you're not too far off, because one of the great Trans Lux theaters (as some of you may know) was in Grand Central Station." He wrote a superb paper on the family who owned the chain of Trans Lux Theaters, and about how the New Deal used the newsreels to promote its programs, particularly the NRA.

What I told him and told all the students was, "Get help. Call your parents. Talk to people, find all

the help you can wherever you can. That's perfectly fine, perfectly legitimate. That's how you accomplish things in life." And I said, "Furthermore, back in your rooms you probably have one of the greatest research devices ever invented. It's called the telephone. Pick it up. Use it." They did. One young woman had a drawing of a Gibson Girl. She didn't know what in the world a Gibson Girl was, but her mother did and became all excited about the project. That's exactly the kind of response I had hoped would happen.

If we can just give our students the bug of doing the work, of getting their hands into history, getting mixed into it, that sense of being on the chase and finding the material, and then analyzing it to see what it adds up to. And this is guaranteed to work because it plays to our natural human curiosity, our fascination with, and the effect on us, of stories.

**Carol Gluck**, *George Sansom Professor of History, Columbia University*

I am a historian of Japan, and like Ted Rabb, I am a veteran of the National History Standards wars, in particular the skirmishes over World History. In past years I have written the material on East Asia for mandated school curricula in several states and participated in the effort to introduce the so-called non-West into mainstream history teaching. But this commitment, which had long animated my concern for history in the schools, was overrun this past year by the experience of observing the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in different countries. I had (I might almost say) the misfortune to be in Europe in May, 1995 at the time of the celebrations of V-E Day, and in Asia in August, 1995, when the commemorations of the end of the war in the Pacific took place there. For the rest of the time, I was in the United States, where the controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit cast its deep shadow over the anniversary -- but you know all about that.

In essence, the surge in commemoration brought about an avalanche of memory that turned into a catastrophe for history. And that surprised me, because until 1995 I had assumed that memory and history worked together, that history and collective memory were in collusion -- not collision -- with one another. But that is not what happened last year.

In country after country, public memory -- in particular, official memory -- was interpreted in almost entirely national terms, with the result that the "world" disappeared from the Second "World" War. Then, in country after country, the story of the war was reduced to a historical one-liner. In China, the media concentrated on the heroic patriotism shown by Chinese soldiers in the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, which is the Chinese name for the war. In Japan, where the Parliament was supposed to pass a "no-war resolution" and express a public apology to the Asian countries that had suffered the depredations of Japanese invasion, the brutally complicated story of the war was condensed to an excruciatingly simple statement, epitomized by the Parliament's conclusion that "It was not an aggressive but an 'aggressive-like' war." In Holland, the story told of liberation from the Germans by the Canadians, and a newspaper report of the historical fact that the British had actually preceded the Canadians into the Netherlands did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm for visiting Canadian veterans . But Dutch celebrants had to be reminded by Indonesians that another liberation had also taken place in 1945: the liberation of Indonesia from Japanese wartime occupation and the declaration of independence from Dutch colonial rule. In Germany, in Britain, in Poland, the stories were different, but the national inflection and the historical reduction were much the same. And in the United States, the Enola Gay controversy symbolized a historical one-liner, which reduced the significance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the single sentence: "The atomic bombs ended the war and saved American lives."

Amidst this avalanche of memory, we must recognize that for the older generations, those who told their stories and marched in the parades around the world, the fiftieth anniversary was their last hurrah. For both veterans and victims, 1995 was probably the last time they could publicly express the searing events of their personal past. It is important to respect the truth of their individual memories. But I am talking about something larger than individual memory. In these nationally bounded one-liners about history, which represented the public memory of the end of the Second World War after half a century, there was almost no talk of the causes, the consequences, and the contexts of that war. And that I found truly astonishing. All such things had been written out of the memory script; in other words, the complexity had been erased. The absence of context was particularly noticeable, epitomized by what happened with the Enola Gay. Reduced to a fusilage, the exhibit showed only the

artifacts of war, not its wrenching decisions and its unforeseen consequences. We were never told that the bombs not only ended the war, but also initiated the nuclear age. Blinkers of this sort descended all over the world, producing the decontextualizaton characteristic of the historical one-liner.

As for the Japanese, they decided in January, 1995 to give up the historical ghost in the peace museum they had been planning since 1979. The Ministry said--and I quote--"It is impossible to present a balanced history of the war, due to different historical perspectives," and so decided to present none at all. Instead it announced that the musuem would focus on "the daily lives of the people." Thus, while in Washington the atomic bombings became a shiny piece of aviation metal, in Tokyo the war would come down to the cotton trousers worn by farm women--the icon of daily life and wartime hardship, the homespun symbol of homefront sacrifice. Something similar happened in Berlin as well. Until unification in 1990, Germany had two national history museums, which told two vastly different stories of the war on either side of the Berlin wall. As if to avoid the difficult task of reconciling these accounts, the newly unified national history museum abandoned history in favor of a display of photographs of Berlin in 1945, which dramatically revealed the brutality and suffering but evaded the context, which was of course the war itself.

These objects represented the icons of war: a fusilage, farm trousers, rubble, and their counterparts all over the world -- important things, to be sure, but not the totality of the "things" that we think of as history. And that was because last year public memory wanted things simple, wanted stories in black and white, wanted heroes and villains clear, whereas history, as we all know, is complicated, gray, and messy the whole way through -- and never reducible to a one-liner, no matter which one-liner that may be.

In many instances public memory had its way, with disturbing results. Just two weeks ago I visited a seventh-grade classroom in British Columbia. The teacher, a capable and committed person, said that she had wanted to correct the view her Canadian students had of American public memory--that is, to right the wrong that had been done by the omissions in the exhibit of the Enola Gay. These smart, savvy seventh-graders told me in sure and certain terms that the U.S. ought never to have dropped the bombs -- it was wrong, no doubt about it. So I, who would normally be concerned to bring Japanese points of view into the classroom, spent nearly the whole hour trying to help the class understand the historical context in which the U.S. had taken its decision. But it was hard going because the controversy over the Enola Gay had turned the bombs into a one-liner: good and necessary, or evil and gratuitous. Memory had driven the history out.

Indeed, most of last year saw history overwhelmed by memory. And as memory prevailed over history, little was said about how things had happened, how people came to war, how to peace, and how terribly difficult it all was. I realized, too, that in the raging public arguments over the national past, the response to controversy is often to remove the context. Like the Japanese ministry, committees declare the matter "too controversial" and throw up their collective hands.

But history is controversial precisely because it is messy and complicated. It is not that other stories are impossible, but that history must contain their complexity. History tells us how we got where we are. What a disservice to the present it is then to make the past seem so easy. Last year left me worried about the political future of international relations, which can scarcely be bright if memory is exclusively national and excessively simple. And last year also made clear the urgency of what we do for a living -- especially you, the heroes of the history teaching profession who are in this room. What you do becomes ever more important as the controversies over memory and identity lead to the eclipse of the complications of history.

My plea, as we fashion our recommendations, Is for more history and for more world history. In the recommendation of four years of history, I hope that two years would be devoted to world history, and for a particular reason--not, certainly, to insist that students know more of what happened. If you have seen the World History Standards, you will know that gluttony for coverage leads to learning indigestion. No, we need more time to do less and to do it better. We need more time for the kind of "lab work" that David McCullough described in his photograph experiment. That is why I think we need two years for world history. We do not need the whole world, but those parts of it that reveal how things happened--how and why, for example, the decisions were made to drop the atomic bombs.

James Billington closed his remarks with a quotation from China, which is my part of the world, so I will, too. One of the early historians of the second century BCE, a founder of the Chinese


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historical tradition -- a counterpart of Thucydides -- described his life's work by saying: "I have examined the deeds and events of the past and investigated the principles behind their success and failure, their rise and decay, in one hundred and thirty chapters. I wished to examine into all that concerns heaven and people. To penetrate the changes of the past and present....If it may be handed down to people who will appreciate it, and penetrate to the villages and great cities, though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret should I have?"

As history teachers and historians I think we have suffered a thousand mutilations. But there is much work to do, and we will do it—without regret.

**Richard Moe**, *President, The National Trust for Historic Preservation*

It is a great pleasure to be here, with this distinguished panel, focusing on an issue that is very close to my heart and close to our mission at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The historic preservation movement in the U.S. has, as its primary business, the saving, the preservation and sometimes the interpretation of historic buildings, landscapes, neighborhoods and sometimes whole communities. Why do we do this? Why do we spend so much time, money and energy on preserving these old things?

Everyone has his own answer to this question, and I will give you mine. First of all, these old things, particularly old buildings, are very attractive. They are esthetically pleasing. They are wonderful works of art that deserve to be preserved. If you have the time I would encourage you just to walk around the neighborhoods of Capitol Hill, for I think you will be confirmed in this judgment. Secondly, older buildings can be put to new uses if their old uses expire. It is something we in the movement call "adaptive reuse," where old schools are made into senior citizen housing and old churches are made into law offices and so forth. There are great, imaginative things being done. But third and perhaps most important, older buildings, old structures, old landscapes connect us with our past. This is what they really do and what I want to focus on today. I have heard David McCullough say many times, very eloquently, that we are becoming an historically illiterate country, and that unfortunately is too true.

We think that historic sites can help address this growing illiteracy by the use of education through preservation. At the National Trust we have eighteen house museums all across the country, all wonderfully diverse, ranging from James Madison's home in Virginia to Woodrow Wilson's house here in Washington, to the Decatur House, to Drayton Hall in Charleston. And we have a strong educational emphasis at each of these sites. Our first responsibility is to be good stewards of these places, but equally it is our responsibility to use these places as educational tools, because that is really what they are. For example, at Shadow-on-the-Teche, a wonderful plantation house in New Iberia, Louisiana, we are not only using the house to educate the community and students from miles around about the history of that place, but we are in partnership with local schools to record local African-American history. At Montpelier we are holding summer institutes for teachers to study James Madison and the Constitution and the great events of colonial times. At Drayton Hall George McDaniel, the director and who is here today, is helping the state of South Carolina to draft new state guidelines for the teaching of social studies.

We estimate that there are somewhere between 6,000 and 8,000 historical sites in the U.S. today that are open to the public. Nobody knows for sure because nobody has ever done a precise inventory, but they are marvelouzly diverse. They range from the Capitol across the street here, to Colonial Williamsburg and Monticello, the great historic sites that we all recognize, to the small house museums that are located in almost every community, staffed only by volunteers. These sites can tell the whole history of the country from the Freedom Trail in Boston and the sites that are represented there; or Independence Hall in Philadelphia; to the great sites here in Washington. But it is not just the political history of the country that they can tell. They can also tell the social history, the economic history and the cultural history of the country, because also in Boston is the Longfellow House, at which wonderfully interesting things happened and wonderfully interesting people passed through. It is still a repository of artifacts and archives that are great teaching tools in and of themselves. Here in Washington, too little visited across the Anacostia River, is the Frederick Douglass House, which tells much of the story of what happened a century and a half ago leading up to the elimination of slavery.

A week ago I was in Atlanta, Georgia in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood, and I saw for the first time the birth home of Martin Luther King, Jr. next to the

Ebeneezer Baptist Church, that tells the story of what happened during a critical period in our history when civil rights came alive. The diversity of these sites represents the entire American experience, including the Pre-Columbian experience. The ruins in the Southwest, Mesa Verde, the Great Mounds in the Ohio River Valley speak eloquently about what little we know about the Pre-Columbian period. And there are sites that interpret farming, ranching, mining, industry, virtually everywhere, through the mills of New England and the restored blast furnaces of Birmingham, Alabama, and Western Pennsylvania. I was recently in New York and visited a new site, called the Tenement Museum. It is on the lower East side on Orchard Street, and is a wonderful place if you get to New York. For a period of about eighty years every ethnic group imaginable went through that tenement, and it is interpreted to reflect that fact. It tells, more eloquently than anything I have ever read, the story of immigration in this country.

Now not all of these sites are accessible to every teacher of history, obviously, but increasingly I hope they might be through the technology that is just coming on-line: virtual reality and the rest, even though they are not the same as being there and seeing it firsthand. For the first time many are going to have an appreciation for what these sites look like, how they feel, and what they can teach us about what happened there and who lived there. I am very encouraged about that, I am on the board of an organization called the Civil War Trust that is trying to save Civil War battlefields. One of the other things that we are doing is developing a program called the Civil War Discovery System, which is an interactive system that will allow visitors to a limited number of war battlefields (and many more in the future) to discover the history of the Civil War through electronic means. There are a hundred million Americans today who have ancestors who fought in the Civil War. This is a subject of great interest, and through the Discovery System you will be able to go to a terminal and determine whether your ancestor fought at Antietam or Gettysburg, and what happened to him. It is going to be a wonderful tool for history. Beyond such access, however, even if the technology is not available or even if a great historic site is not available, there are sites in every community in America that have significance, and that can be tools for teaching. Whether they are schools, churches, public buildings, factories, farms, or houses, they all tell a story, and the creative teachers in America are finding those structures and finding those stories and using them as tools for teaching.

I have my own experience along this line. Some years ago when I had the privilege to serve in the Carter White House, we were trying to pass a treaty—the *Panama Canal Treaty*—and one of the books that we were required to read was something called **The Path Between the Seas**. I had never heard of David McCullough before. It was required reading, but it soon became wonderful reading, and I got all wrapped up in it. I could not put it down, because it told this terrific story I had never known. It was history at its best, and there is nobody in America who writes history or teaches history better than David McCullough. I thought I knew everything that deserved to be known about the Panama Canal, but then I discovered I did not, because I had the opportunity to go to Panama not once but twice with David McCullough as my teacher and my guide, and it really came alive. The reading of history and visiting of places, taken together, can do more to bring history alive, particularly to a generation that does not concentrate as well as earlier generations, though you may be the best judges of that.

So: read history, to be sure, but also see it, feel it, and walk through it; and it will come alive. Over a century and a half ago, John Ruskin said this, *Architecture is to be regarded by us with the most serious thought. We may well live without her and worship without her but we cannot remember without her.* And that is literally true. David McCullough was the first person I heard say that the built environment is our collective memory, and indeed it is. As such, it offers the best medium for helping to bring history to life.

➳**W. Chris Stewart**, *Director, English and History Curriculum Framework Project, District of Columbia Public Schools*

Right now I am immersed in standards development, working with some dedicated teachers trying to flesh out what we want the District of Columbia students to know and be able to do in history and English language arts. Many of those teachers are here with me today. So, I want to represent them well in talking about what will be our second charge in our standards development effort, because at the very root of developing standards is professional development and instructional support.


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Therefore, I have chosen classroom practices as my topic today. I will discuss classroom practices from the perspective of teacher education and professional development.

When history students are asked about their "history" classes, they frequently respond with a refrain we have heard for years—IT'S BORING! I can't understand this answer—history is a part of everything we do. It is a part of everything our students do. Outside of the classroom, these students frequently engage in historical discussion and debate without the thought that they are engaging in "history." Often times their discussions and debates are not woven in a thorough historical context—but it sure offers a departure point for deeper and more thorough historical inquiry.

If this is true, what must we do as history educators to motivate our students? What must we do to move them to want to learn about our human past—to engage them in historical debate and discussion—to involve them in research of the human experience and ultimately to write about that experience. My answer is simple—we improve classroom practices through teacher education, professional development and teacher support.

*(Left to right) Panelists Carol Gluck, David McCullough, and W. Chris Stewart prepare to take questions from the audience at the NCHE Symposium.*

In discussing student achievement, Deborah Meier, a nationally recognized change agent, says that "we must change all the rules and regulations, the systems for testing and assessing, the licensing and training of teachers, the expectations of parents and teachers, and make the difficult choices of what to do first, what to eliminate, what to focus on, and what to alter." If we are to make history very, very interesting in our classes and make our classes a place where our students want to be, we must make our classrooms student-centered, student-focused. Let's minimize the use of traditional approaches to teaching history—lecture; silent, undirected reading; global assignments that give little direction, no audience, and ill-defined purposes. We must put the "story" back in history.

While attending a District of Columbia Council for the Social Studies conference, I heard a guest presenter, Dr. Thomas DiBacco, talk about a survey that had been completed by a group of college students. When they were asked to identify the most famous American historian the answer most frequently given was James Michener. James Michener tells stories—stories that are rich in history and geography—but he is not a historian. If this survey were administered today, we would probably see the names David McCullough and Joy Hakim, because they too write stories—stories that put history in the framework of our daily lives, that make history meaningful for the young, for students.

We must remember that our students are not yet "historians." We cannot use an approach that we would use to share ideas and information with historians to excite our students. When teaching, we must be mindful that students may not yet be turned on to the importance of their historical past, but if we remember their developmental age and provide appropriate instruction, they may one day be as historically informed as we are, as you are. Historians must establish sound teacher education programs, professional development and teacher support programs. The student teacher relationship is not a bad one to model. Teachers must observe, discuss, write about, and practice their craft with experts—experts in their own field. They must see instructional strategies being used in a practical situation—in the classroom.

What better place is there for teacher education or professional development to take place than the

classroom. Let us help some of our best history teachers turn their classrooms into learning laboratories for both students and teachers. In this way teachers can see good instruction firsthand, observe student responses to good instruction, and discuss that experience with the teacher whose class was observed, and seek guidance from a staff developer who can point out the techniques and strategies that can bring history to life. This professional development experience should not end here. It should be ongoing and should include strong follow-up support for the participants in their own classrooms as they begin to practice and use some of the strategies they observed, wrote about and discussed.

Let's reconfigure the classroom. History is the story of the human experience. Wouldn't it be great if every history classroom were a repository of historical documents, materials and resources, books of all kinds, artifacts and exhibits; if every history classroom had a stage and a lectern; if every class had the technology to capture the daily performances of the students and record the learning as it takes place.

I would like to close with a challenge to each of you to be agents of change. My suggestions may not be the suggestions you would use to change classroom practices in America. But do give serious thought to how students can be turned on to history. Without a sound education in history, we risk our youth missing the pleasure and the pain of our human experience. The risk is too great, the challenge too real, the joy of increased interest and achievement in history is too real for us not to improve what happens in every history classroom in America.

➳**Geno Flores**, *Teacher-Consultant, Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA*

I am very excited to be here today, and to be a part of this national Symposium. I cannot tell you how honored I am to be among so many notable historians, men and women of great scholarly work. It is fascinating just to be here. I spent the last twenty years as a teacher in public education in California, so I have been on the front lines of many of the issues and items that are going to be discussed during this Symposium.

In my capacity as a teacher, I was asked to be a part of a teacher-engagement policy-making group in California. The State Board of Education is in charge of education, but they receive advice from an advisory board; its formal name is the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission. It is responsible for advising the State Board on the vision of the curriculum that students should take away from their K-12 experience. We capture the vision in documents such as the California **History-Social Science Framework**. Serving on this body was not just a professional enhancement; it enabled me to carry the message of the children from the classroom. And that message appears in the concerns you will hear again this week-end, the concerns we tried to promote.

In that capacity, I was also asked to be an advisor in developing an assessment for history in California. It was to have a history focus, and between 1989 and 1994 our work as teachers, as advisors to those who were the psychometricians, the experts, was "No, that's not quite it; no, you need to tweak this; it needs to be more like this, and it needs to be more engaging; it needs to be more like what students are actually doing in classrooms."

Putting all of those together, I have recently been asked to be a teacher-consultant for the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA. It provides me this great opportunity to have two feet spread very widely, from the classroom to the research center; to be able to sit with the ivory tower types and say, "That's not what kids think," and "that's not how it really works, but if research says so, OK." In fact, in coming to the Center, everyone had these distinguished titles on their doors, with lots of letters. My title said, "Oh sure, it works great in practice; what does it look like in theory?"

For many of our students, history is a lot like a cartoon. Here are two characters walking along, and one says to the other, "Hey, what's the name of that game where you try to answer a bunch of trivia questions for points?" The other says, "Oh, we play that in school--we call it history." And for many of our students, why shouldn't it seem to be trivia? They are bombarded with this endless list of names, dates, places, and events, and for them, they see no connection between them, whether their curriculum is a survey course, or whether it is one, two, or 10 years of study in their K-12 experience; it doesn't matter.

It's not just that history seems so obscure to them; much of it has to do with the ways in which it is presented. Every student can tell you that they've experienced at some point what this cartoon teacher does at the end of the year; in this case it is Miss Wilson, and the student says, "You did a great job in school this year, Miss Wilson. I'll always remember that George Washington wrote the Gettysburg Address in 1492." Because so many facts come to them, history becomes jumbled in their heads.

Because I come from California, and the California **History-Social Science Framework** is exemplified within **Building a History Curriculum**, the report of the Bradley Commission on History in Schools, we have lots of history. We have the 4 years between grades 7 and twelve. We have 5 years between grades 6 and twelve. We have a history-centered experience, but I'm here to say that it's not just the years of history that are important. It's the way in which history is presented, making sure that history is focused on the key concepts and principles that students should take away with them. The Bradley Commission and the National Council for History Education have continued to promote history through its vital themes, narratives, and habits of mind.

Other agencies have taken up the cause as well: the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA has produced materials for teachers that remind them about the essential understandings of the field. In fact, within its **Lessons from History**, it helps teachers to remember what the big ideas are. Students ask that all the time of teachers: "So what? Why am I supposed to know this again?" Because if they didn't get it, we have these kinds of examples that occur. In all that we do, we must continue to stress that students get their big ideas from their study of history. We say that as teachers, we say that as researchers, as authors, as producers, as film and documentary-makers, as exhibitors; in everything we do we must make certain that students seek the big idea, and do so through history.

Assessment is a hallmark of the teacher's job. It's on-going in teachers' classrooms, in informal and formal sessions as well. And there are times when we have asked students to think hard about their experiences. When we lose the big idea, however, an assessment may go like this: a student might say, "Here's the question: name the American Revolutionary hero who led the Green Mountain Boys: a) Samuel Adams. b) Dolly Madison. c) Ethan Allen. Well, let's see, I know Samuel Adams is a beer, Dolly Madison is a cupcake or something, and Ethan Allen is a furniture store, so the answer is d) None of the above."

Long ago, we all sat in a math class with a teacher who said, "Getting the answer correct is important, but I also want you to *show your work*," because that math teacher wanted to know the processes you went through to get there. How is that different from historians? We're teachers of history; don't we, too, want to know how they came up with that answer, that idea? We need to be able to provide them with a format and a process that allows us to look into how the students are thinking. What was the basis of their argument; what materials did they use to come up with that point of view? Assessment provides teachers in the classroom with information as to where to go next. If I only had an answer and it was wrong, I didn't know what caused the student to come up with this answer. I would then need to ask him.

For many of our students, when they see opportunities like this in a multiple-choice fashion, it leads to this next scene. Here are two familiar characters from cartoon fame: one says to the other, "It's going to be a history test and I need your help. Unfortunately, it'll probably be mystical choice." For many of our students the answer just seems to mystically appear. "Whoa, I got this one right." Now I'm certainly not against the use of multiple choice. I've learned that multiple choice provides some very important information. But I've also learned through my teaching experience that multiple choice tells me what students don't know. It doesn't tell me what they do know. If students' only experience is in these kinds of processes, certainly they become frustrated.

Another example captures your heart, and tugs at every teacher's. Here is a situation in which the cartoon teacher says, "Calvin, your test was an absolute disgrace. It's obvious you haven't read any of the material. Our first president was not Chef Boy-ar-Dee, and you ought to be ashamed of turning in such preposterous answers." And Calvin says, "You know, I just don't test well." Again, we know, as teachers, students have lots of knowledge. We often have situations of open-ended types of assessments, and we have said to students, "If you can't think of that person's name, if you can't remember the exact event, if you don't recall exactly what that act was, tell me something about it so that I know you got it. We'll work on the name later." What we must do as educators is to make sure the kinds of assessments that we use with our students are linked to the wonderful instructional strategies

and techniques that teachers are using to engage those students in the classroom. If there is not an alignment between the types of assessments and the types of curricular activities and instruction, we have not just a mismatch, but an unfortunate situation, giving us information that doesn't lead us anywhere. Schools and classrooms and districts, aligned to states, aligned to national formats, do not all have to be exactly the same, but they at least should use formats that are similar and in which students become expected to perform in certain ways.

Because of my opportunity to work with some of the scholar-researchers in assessment at UCLA, I've come to learn the value of criteria, of establishing a rubric that determines what is a standard of excellence. What does it look like, what are you looking for? It certainly shouldn't be much like the Supreme Court's decision on pornography: I'll know it when I see it. This standard of excellence must be evident to everyone, especially to our students. Otherwise, we have situations like this: here is a cartoon student who says, "Miss Fishbreath, I'm afraid I just don't take tests very well, so this test won't be an accurate reflection of what I know." "Oh, that's OK, Skyler, I don't correct tests very well, so it all balances out." Teachers need also to understand the hallmarks of excellence. Set the criteria, help them learn to use those criteria in evaluating student work. Determine what they happen to be, whether we use the National Assessment of Educational Progress's guidelines on "Advanced, Basic, and Proficient" levels, or some other descriptions; it doesn't matter. Make it evident; share it; send it home with the kids; put it on the wall so that everyone knows what it looks like. Use student work as an example. It's all around us; it already exists in lots of publications. For years I used **The Concord Review** to show my students excellent high school research papers. Kids would say, "I can't do that." I answered, "OK, maybe not now, but you will. You need to continue to work on it: this is a hallmark of excellence. Get there, and we'll work together."

As teachers we know that, all about us, students are expected to make decisions. Even these two educationally disadvantaged and occupationally challenged cartoon individuals, sitting on the park bench, tell each other, "School is mostly True-False, but real life is all essay questions." We know the importance of history, especially in a democratic society. Students are expected to use their knowledge and skills and views to make decisions all the time. They should know that the current topics in today's election, today's world--immigration, taxation, balanced budgets--aren't new ideas. They've been around for a long time, and the arguments that are presented today are very similar to arguments of the past.

In closing, what I'd like to do is to propose to all of us, that we provide the students with opportunities to allow them to tell us what they know. This probably is captured best by Sally, who says in this cartoon, "This is my report on emeralds. Cleopatra had lots of emeralds because she had her own emerald mine. Emeralds, unlike other stones, appear the same color in artificial light as in sunlight. Well, that's all I know about emeralds. But what I could tell you about Cleopatra would make your head spin." I suggest we provide all of our students with the opportunities to *make our heads spin.*√

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*The panelists were: James Billington, Librarian of Congress; author/biographer and PBS host/narrator David McCullough; Historian Carol Gluck, Columbia University; Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Richard Moe; Master classroom teacher Geno Flores, California; and Director of the English and History Curriculum Framework Project, W. Chris Stewart, District of Columbia. The panel was moderated by Theodore K. Rabb, Chair of the NCHE Board of Trustees, and Professor of History at Princeton University.*

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